

BREAKING THE BARRIERS IN WORLD MISSIONS

By Domenic Marbaniang

In Luke 10:2, Jesus made an important statement about our chronological placement in God's missionary plan: we are in the age of harvest - at the ends of time (in the end of times).

The implications of it is that despite the apparent hostility of some mission fields, the fact abides that the world was already ready for harvesting at the time Jesus spoke these words. The coming of Jesus marked the beginning of the Harvest age and the end of times. The missionary has no time for such words as "hostility", "unresponsiveness", "stony ground", "mission impasse", etc. He is not ruled by the anxiety of temporalities and the angst of time. He is called to be an harvester and follows the passion and mission of the Lord of the harvest.

He sees the harvest, comes to the field, and gathers it into the barns. But then, it's indispensably important to remember that the harvester must follow the strategy of the Lord of the harvest to both see the harvest and finish his part in the harvesting mission.

The barriers of missions are considered to be many: cultural, conceptual, contextual, sociological, spiritual, etc. There are certain people groups who have been almost unresponsive to the gospel for the past several centuries. Such unresponsiveness is regarded to be a blockade and some have wondered if it's fair to spend time and resources over an apparently "unbreakable" ground. But, perhaps, the oasis is only a few steps ahead. It would be tragic if one decided to turn back now just because the signs were invisible. Perhaps, the greatest breakthrough is at hand and one more wielding of the spade would open up a fountain of gushing waters!

Some have argued that the work of missions is over since every ethnic group has been reached with the gospel of Christ. That is an amazing optimism - but, hearsay lacks exactitude often times. The [Abhuj Maria tribe](#) of central India, for instance, has never heard what the gospel is all about. In fact, no one approaches this tribe for fear of being shot down. I understand that Jesus talked of nations as ethnic groups, but I wonder if it's all very right to limit the terms "reached" and "unreached" to only people groups. Are we able to talk of the Church at Abhuj Maria as Paul was able to talk of the Church at Ephesus or the Church at Corinth? It's important to understand the importance of geographical territory when talking of world evangelization. In Acts 17:26-27, Paul connects *ethnos* with their historical and geographical experiences. The modern world might be a bit different but not totally distinct from the world of Athens. Let's ask the question, "Is there a witnessing community in this particular village, town, or city" when we are thinking of "reached" or "unreached". It's not just enough to get the gospel to the Greeks; it's important to publish the Goodnews in every Greek city, village, and town. The witnessing community will carry on the work of evangelization ahead.

Let's open the gates rather than attempting to scale insurmountable walls - walls were never meant to be scaled after all. We need the keys after we know the entry points. What was evidence to the wise men (the star) might not be evidence for someone else. What was evidence for Peter might not be evidence for John. What was evidence for Paul might not be evidence for Cornelius. The Spirit alone knows the hearts of men, of communities, of individuals. May the Lord of the harvest give us discernment to find the pillars on which the building stands (cf. Judges 13:29-30). "It is not by might nor by power but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). Perhaps, now at these ends of times, we're ready to reap the benefits of what the earlier missionaries have laboured. A closed community, as hostile as it has been, will now see His salvation. He makes us His instruments to first open their eyes so that they are able to experience His light and liberty (Acts 26:18) - and what the joy of knowing it! Wield the spade - it'll finally strike the fountain!

"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!"